

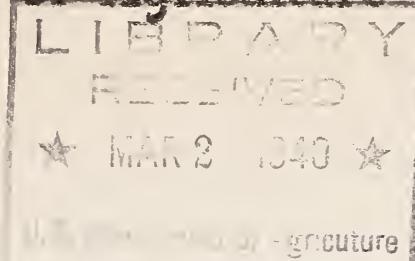
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INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture



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WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE MARKET BASKET

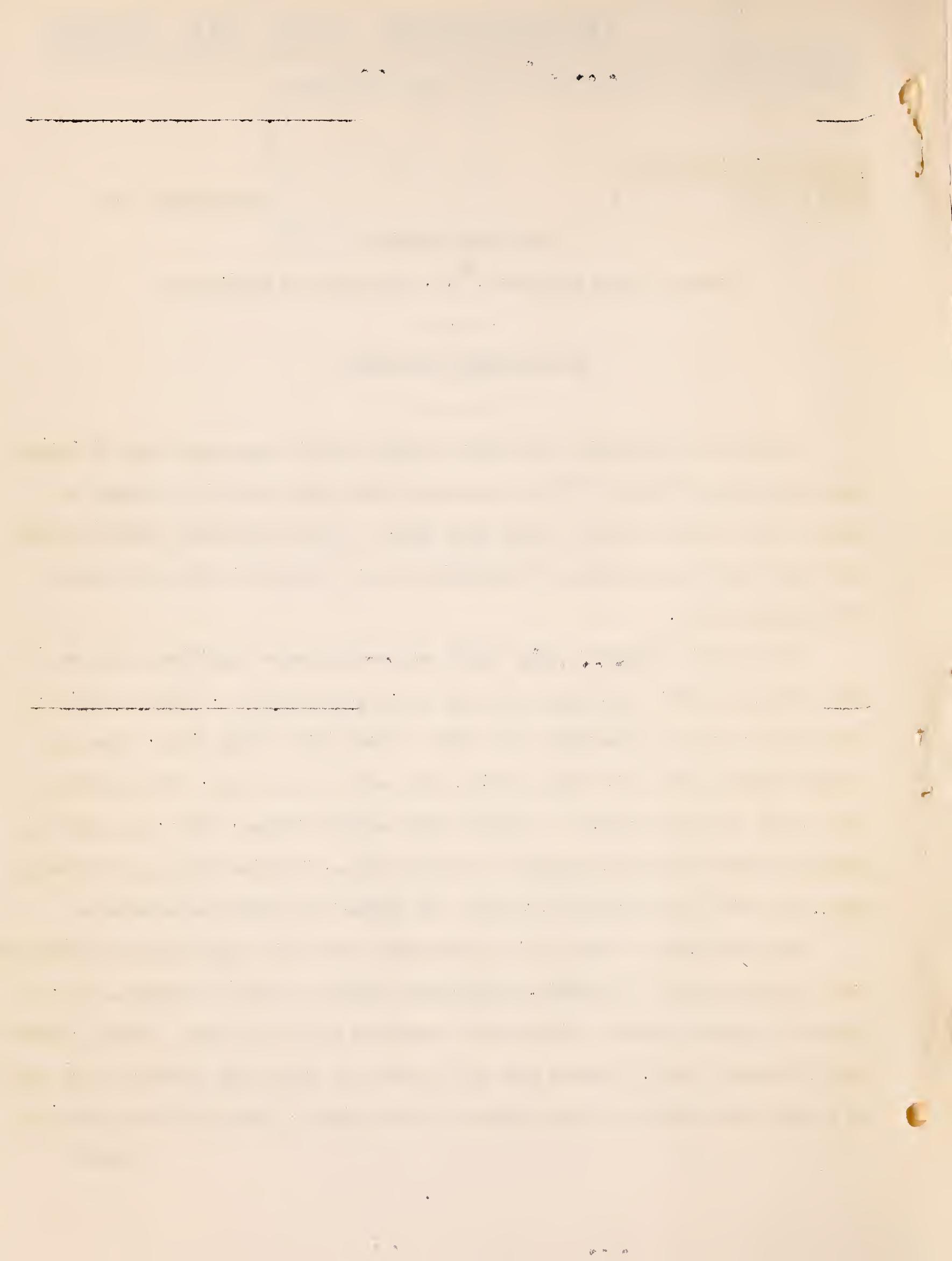
by
Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture

END-OF-WINTER HOT DISHES

Between the blustering cold days of winter and the lazy warm days of spring, comes the month of March. It's an in-between month that calls for a change in meals. Most families welcome a main dish that's a little different from the roasts and stews they've been having. But they're not yet ready for salad plates and picnic-style meals.

So if you're trying to tempt jaded end-of-the-winter appetites, check up to make sure you haven't been neglecting any of the possibilities. Eggs are down in price now, so it's an especially good time to plan meals around them. Cheese is another favorite that will bring variety into meals at low cost. Fish available now -- both fresh and canned -- suggests many unusual dishes. Nuts, too, offer a pleasant surprise when they appear in the main dish, at either the noon or evening meal. And this season peanuts, walnuts, and pecans are especially abundant.

From the Federal Bureau of Home Economics come four suggestions for different types of main dishes. A fluffy, golden-brown souffle is hard to surpass. Or, if you're in a hurry, omelets offer another excellent way to use eggs. Cheese, flaked fish, vegetable pulp, or ground meat can be added to either the souffle or the omelet to make them worthy of their ranking as main dishes. Croquettes are especially



suitable for a hot luncheon dish, or to head the dinner menu. Make the croquettes from chopped nuts, canned fish, fresh fish, eggs, or cheese. Or, if you'd rather not bother with deep-fat frying, you can use fish or nuts in a baked loaf.

Eggs are the chief ingredient for any kind of a souffle -- with either a thick white sauce, or bread crumbs, or both as the binder. Usually a souffle that contains bread crumbs holds up better than one made with white sauce alone.

If the flavoring for the souffle is to be cheese, use the well-aged kind and grate it or shave it into thin slices. Add it to the hot milk mixture and stir until the cheese has melted. Add this to the well-beaten egg yolks. Season and fold the yolk mixture into the stiffly-beaten egg whites. Fold in carefully and do not try to break up every lump of the beaten whites. You'll lose leavening power if you do, and these air bubbles will bake out.

When flaked fish or vegetable pulp is used, add it to the hot milk mixture, just like the cheese.

Long, slow cooking is one of the secrets of making a perfect souffle. In a very moderate oven (300 degrees F.), the air bubbles in the egg white will expand and the mixture will set without becoming tough. When a souffle is made with bread crumbs as a binder and is baked in a very moderate oven, there's no danger that it will fall. But a souffle is always best when served as soon as it comes from the oven.

Omelets, the pride of many a famous French chef, are simple enough to be made at home in almost no time. Use one or two eggs for each person, with one tablespoon of milk or water for each egg, and salt to taste. For a fluffy omelet, beat the yolks, add the liquid, and fold into the stiffly-beaten egg whites. Pour this mixture into a hot, greased frying pan and start cooking it on top of the stove over a moderate heat.



One method of cooking an omelet is to cover the pan and let the egg mixture cook in its own steam. Or if you like, leave the pan uncovered and when the bottom of the omelet is slightly brown, brown the top in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for 10 minutes. Or, continue cooking it on top of the stove until the mixture sets, and then brown the top under a low broiler flame for 2 or 3 minutes.

Some people prefer a flat omelet, because it is less trouble to make. The ingredients and the method are the same as for a fluffy omelet, except that the yolks and whites of the eggs are beaten together -- not separately.

For a change, add grated cheese or cooked vegetables to the omelet mixture before it is cooked. Or, spread them over half of the cooked omelet. Then fold the omelet, turn it onto a hot platter, and serve. Another good idea is to spread the omelet with jelly before folding.

Croquettes and loaves offer other suggestions for main dishes that are a little different. In making a croquette mixture, use a thick white sauce, rice, potatoes, bean pulp, or a cereal as the binder. Use originality in seasoning, and for variation try adding chopped hard-cooked egg, nuts, grated cheese, cooked fresh fish, or canned fish.

If you like a crisp crust and a soft and creamy inside dip the croquettes, after they are shaped, into beaten egg and then into crumbs and let them stand to dry. Then fry in deep fat at 375 degrees F., until the crumbs are a golden brown. If the croquettes are made from cooked ingredients, they will need only to be fried until they are hot all the way through.

The standard mixture for a nut loaf includes -- in addition to the ground or chopped nuts -- chopped vegetables, a cereal or bread crumbs, and a thick sauce for binder. To give the loaf a crisp texture, the clever cook will see that at least one of the vegetables is celery, green pepper, or carrots.

Fish loaves are made in much the same way. Almost any fresh or canned fish can be used, but salmon and tuna are special favorites.

Most folks like to serve a sauce as a finishing touch with both croquettes and loaves of all kinds. The choice of sauce will vary with the main ingredient of the loaf or croquette. Plain white sauce, egg sauce, tomato sauce, and cheese sauce are most often used.

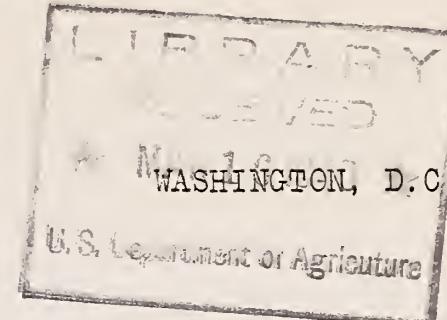


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THE MARKET BASKET
by
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COOKING TEMPERATURES

"I guess the sirup forms a hard ball now," the biggest girl at the taffy pull used to say. That was the signal to take the pan off the fire and pour the candy out to cool. Then with buttered hands the crowd would pull the taffy. It was all a lot of fun, but only too often the candy never did get firm enough to cut into pieces-- and sometimes it got hard before there was a chance to pull it.

Today the girl who was never quite sure how the taffy would turn out is using a sugar-cookery thermometer that tells when the sirup is ready to take off the stove. Of course, when reading the thermometer, she makes sure that her eye is on the level of the fluid in the tube. And she makes sure that the bulb is well down in the center of the boiling sirup. But by using the thermometer, it's possible to get her candy the same every time.

However, the thermometers for candy-making are just one of the ways in which controlled temperature is now taking the "guess work" out of food preparation. Good cooks are coming to realize more and more that oven temperature will make the difference between the souffle that is perfect and the one that falls like a pricked balloon. Correct temperature is equally important for frying tender doughnuts-- for roasting meat to just the right turn--for the best conditions for the rising of bread dough-- and even for the safe storage of foods that spoil easily.



And to help the woman who wants to keep food at the right temperature and hold down waste from too much heat or too much cold, the modern kitchen is equipped with temperature-measuring and regulating devices.

Modern cookbooks suggest cooking by exact temperature in almost every recipe. For oven-cookery, they have divided the temperature scale into several sections--each of which is suitable for certain foods.

Egg dishes and other foods that have delicate proteins are baked at the lower end of the scale. For example, a very slow oven (225 to 250° F.) is used for baking fruit whips. A slow oven (250 to 300° F.) is used for sponge cake and custards. And a very moderate oven (300 to 325° F.) is used for souffles and angel food cake.

A moderate oven (325 to 375° F.) is used for baking most cakes, and a moderately hot oven (375 to 400° F.) is right for most cookies. A hot oven (400 to 450° F.) is needed for rolls and muffins. But a very hot oven (450 to 500° F.) is used only in special cases--such as the first step in baking popovers.

Naturally the lower temperatures are needed when the food is to cook slowly and to brown gradually, and the higher temperatures when it is to have a crisp crust. Food that is heavy with sugar or dried fruit also needs a lower temperature so the sugar will not scorch.

It is also interesting to note that when a food is in the shape of a thick mass, it is cooked at a lower temperature than when it is spread out thin. For example, a large turkey or a good-sized capon is roasted at a lower temperature than a smaller bird--in order to cook light meat and dark meat through evenly without burning the skin. And for the same reason, a loaf cake is baked at a lower temperature than cup cakes.



The oven thermometer and regulator are helpful in following exact temperatures for baking. They offer a simple way to make sure that the oven is low enough to cook dishes made with eggs or other delicate proteins without toughening them. They also assure you that the oven is the right temperature to give a pan of rolls a crisp crust without burning the edges. In fact, these instruments serve as useful guides in baking most any food exactly right.

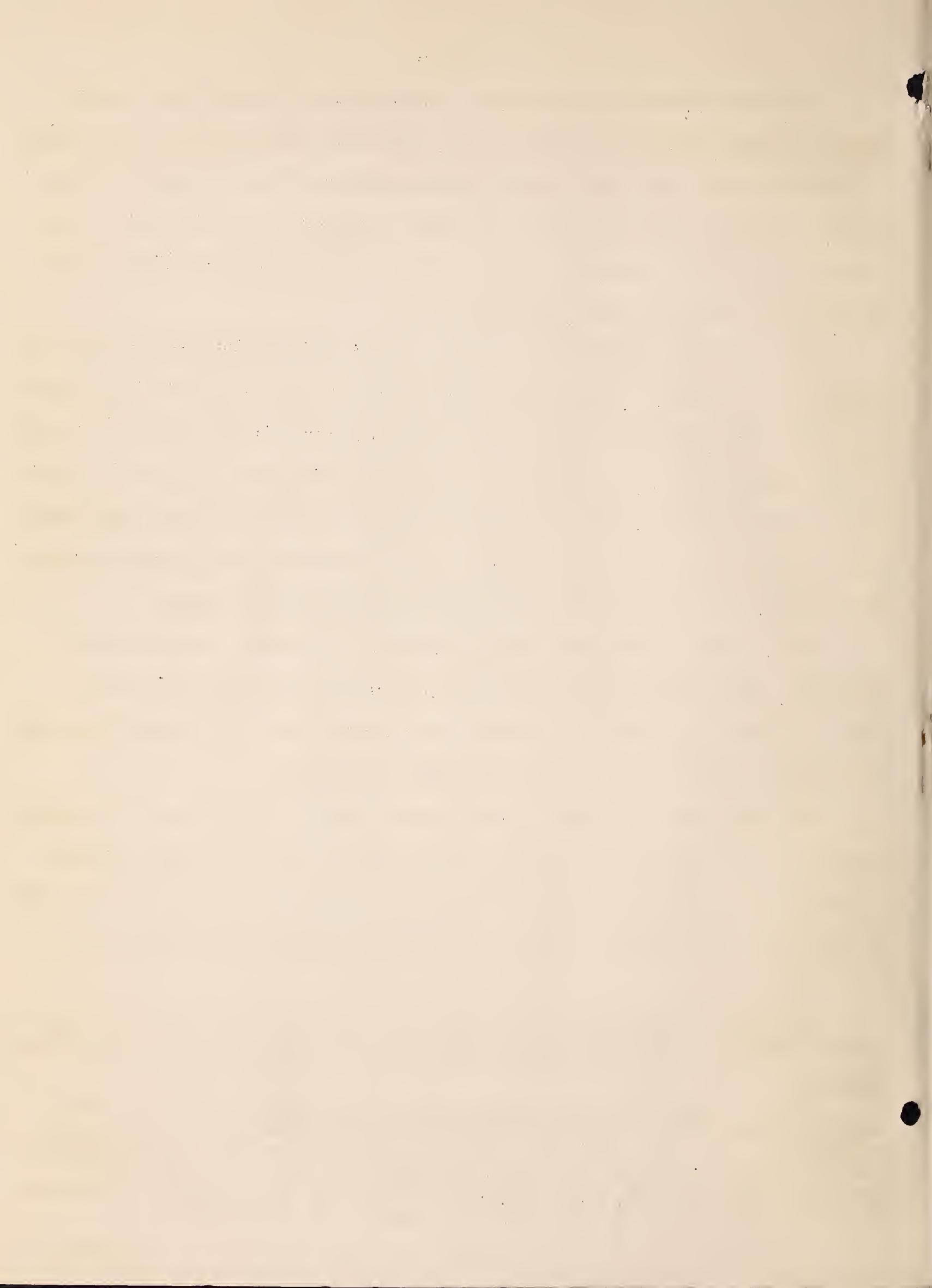
The roast-meat thermometer is another device that helps the cook to turn out perfectly cooked meats. Inserted into the center of a ham, a prime rib cut of beef, or a leg of lamb, and left there all the time the roast is in the oven it will tell when the inside of the roast is cooked to just the desired turn. Because the thermometer tells the temperature in the center of the roast (the part that gets "done" last), it shows when the meat is exactly right for serving. And it keeps you from overcooking the meat and wasting more than necessary through shrinkage.

When it comes to deep-fat frying, controlled temperature is particularly important. And a deep-fat thermometer that clamps over the side of the pan is a much more convenient method for indicating the temperature of the fat than the test of browning a cube of bread in a certain number of seconds.

With the thermometer right in the fat and showing exactly how hot it is, it's possible to make French-fried potatoes the same golden brown every time. And the thermometer is a safeguard against fried failures such as soggy doughnuts with cracked crusts from fat that is too hot or grease-soaked doughnuts from fat that isn't hot enough.

The proper temperature is also important in storing foods before they are cooked. There are some foods, such as bananas and sweet potatoes, that keep best at room temperature. Others require good refrigeration to prevent the growth of bacteria.

Dairy products, broth, and desserts are most likely to spoil, and need a temperature under 45° F.--which is usually found only in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Uncooked meats and salad greens belong in the next coldest place. And for the safe keeping of all foods, the temperature should be under 50° F. throughout the refrigerator. A refrigerator thermometer may be helpful in finding the coldest spots and in deciding how to arrange food on the shelves.

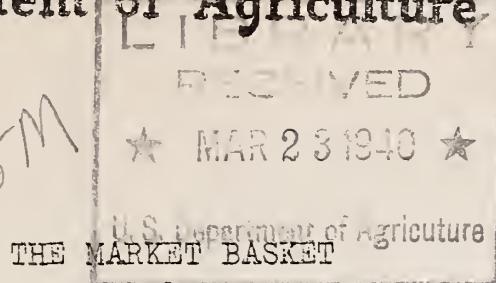


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WASHINGTON, D. C.

by
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EGGS FOR EASTER

Easter time is egg time--the season for coloring eggs, rolling eggs, and hunting eggs. But on the more serious side, there is the matter of cooking with eggs to take advantage of present low prices.

For the woman, who is making use of this good protein food in her spring meal planning, this "egg quiz" has been worked out. The questions are typical of many that arise in the selection and cooking of eggs, and the answers are given by home economists and others in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Selection of Eggs

Q. Can you tell the quality of eggs by just looking at them?

A. It's pretty hard to tell much about eggs by looking at them from the outside. But it is true that eggs are usually better when the shells look dull--because that means that the natural "bloom" is still on the egg. When this covering is rubbed off, air goes through the shell more readily and may cause the egg to lose moisture more quickly.

Q. Does the size make any difference in the quality of eggs?

A. No, good eggs may be either large or small. But the size does make a difference in the weight of a dozen eggs. When measured by weight, you get more egg in a dozen large eggs than in a dozen small eggs. But if the small eggs are a great deal lower in price, they may be the better bargain.



Q. Is there any other guide that the buyer can use in selecting eggs?

A. The United States government, as well as many of the individual states have set up a system for grading eggs. In grading, a test known as "candling" makes it possible to judge the inside quality of the egg. It's a good idea to learn the grades used in your locality, and to buy accordingly. For eggs served as eggs--you'll want the best grades; but for some cooking purposes, the less expensive grades are just as good.

Q. How can the buyer tell whether the eggs have been graded?

A. Often the package of eggs will have a seal telling the grade and the date of grading. The grading system varies in different states, but most of them are patterned after that of the Federal government, which uses four grades.

Q. What are the grades that are used?

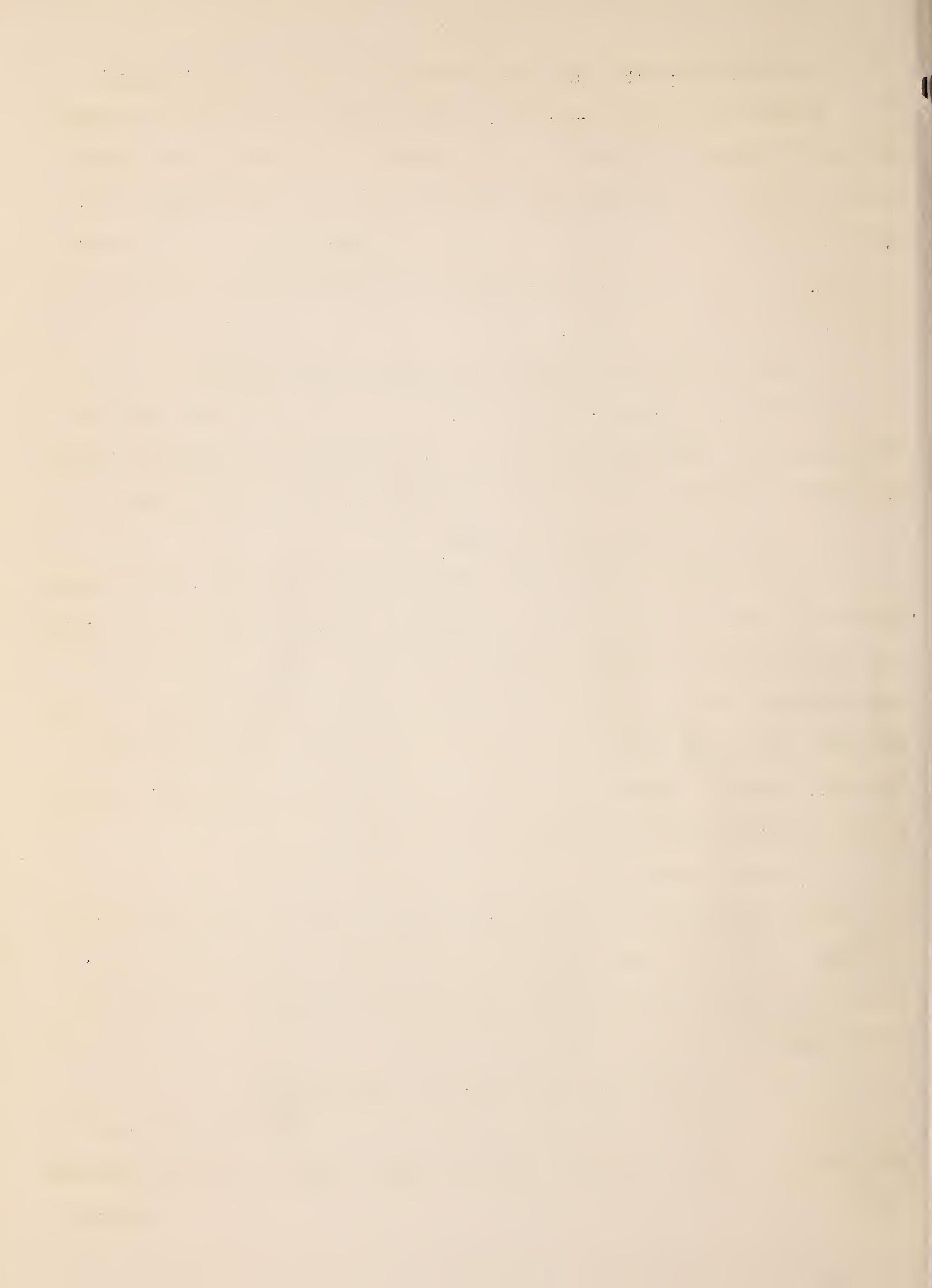
A. The top grade is U.S. Special, which is a very fancy egg. Next in line is the U.S. Extra, which is not quite so fancy but is the top grade in most stores. The next grade is U.S. Standard, which is a good usable grade for most purposes. Eggs graded U.S. Trade are suitable for cooking where delicacy of flavor is not so important. Eggs in all four of these grades are clean and sound and wholesome. But those in the lower grades have a deeper air cell--a more mobile yolk--a thinner white--and the germ cell may show some development.

Q. What is a fresh egg?

A. We usually think of a newly-laid egg as a fresh egg. But if the egg is not cooled quickly and handled carefully, it may become stale in a day or two. However, if an egg is given the right care and stored properly, it may keep its "fresh" qualities after several months of storage.

Q. What is the best way to care for eggs in the home?

A. Put them in the refrigerator as quickly as possible. If shells are dirty, wipe them with a dry cloth. But don't wash the eggs, as that will take off



the natural "bloom," which protects the egg from the air. But be sure to take the eggs out of the refrigerator and let them warm to room temperature before you try to beat them for a cake or a souffle. Egg whites beat up best when they are just about room temperature.

Food Value

Q. What are the food values in an egg?

A. Either the brown-shelled or white-shelled egg is a storehouse of protein, minerals, and vitamins. The protein in both the yolk and white is the efficient kind that is necessary for the growth and the repair of body tissues. The minerals found in the yolk include lots of iron (in which ordinary diets are likely to be low) and good supplies of calcium and phosphorus. Egg yolks are also a good source of vitamin A, and they contain vitamins B₁, G, and D; the whites also contain vitamin G. However, the vitamin content of the hen's ration influences the vitamin value of the egg.

Q. What is meant by egg allergy?

A. An allergy is a sensitiveness to certain foods, which makes some persons suffer severe disturbances. Eggs, which are so easily digested by most persons, may cause allergy in others. This condition should be given medical attention, and in many cases it can be gradually overcome by building up a tolerance--that is, by eating just a small quantity of egg at a time until the system can finally handle it perfectly.

Cooking Eggs

Q. What is the best way to cook eggs?

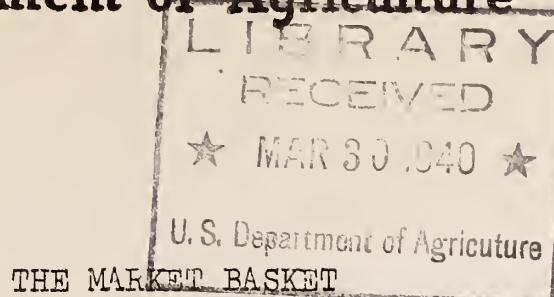
A. Slow cooking at an even, moderate temperature is the guiding rule in egg cookery. Eggs cooked in the shell will be more tender and more evenly done, if you start them in cold water and bring it to a temperature just below the boiling point. It takes about 30 minutes to hard-cook eggs this way. Poached eggs are dropped into salted, boiling water--but the water goes down to the simmering point at once, because the cold eggs lower the temperature. When frying eggs, the temperature of the fat should also be kept low--just as when cooking in water.



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Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

EARLY SPRING VEGETABLES

Early vegetables are the first harbingers of spring in the realm of food.

It is fortunate that the best way of cooking vegetables to make them taste good is also the best way to save food values. To the city homemaker, the arrival of tender green asparagus and ruby pink stalks of rhubarb confirm the weatherman's report about the change of seasons. And to the home gardener there's untold satisfaction in watching for the first green shoots that will eventually bear vegetables for the table.

First come the wild greens -- dandelion and sorrel in many places. In other sections there are watercress and cowslip, or pokeweed and milkweed. Lamb's quarter, purslane, field cress and many others appear on the list of greens in some localities.

If the greens have roots or any wilted leaves -- cut these off. Then wash the greens very thoroughly, through several changes of water. Always lift the greens from the water, to let the sand fall to the bottom.

When vegetables are served raw in a green salad or as a relish, most of the food values are retained. Use the vegetables as soon as possible after they are harvested because they gradually lose some of their vitamins when held in storage. However, keeping them in the refrigerator or other cold place will cut down this loss.

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When greens are used raw, wash them quickly and put them in a cold place to become crisp. Don't let them stand in water.

If the greens are to be cooked, put them in a covered saucepan. If the saucepan is thick enough for them to cook slowly, use just the water that clings to the leaves and have a very low fire under the pan. Cook until just tender. Otherwise, cook the greens quickly in a small amount of lightly salted boiling water. Leave the cover on the pan until the greens are wilted, and then remove the cover to finish cooking. Season the greens lightly, and dress them with butter or other fat.

Panning is another good way to cook greens -- especially those with a pungent flavor. Melt some fat in a skillet, add the chopped greens. Cover the pan to keep in the steam, and cook slowly for 15 or 20 minutes, or until tender. Sprinkle a small amount of flour over the greens, mix well, and then pour in some milk or cream. Season with salt and pepper. These panned greens will contain all of the food value and flavor of the vegetable, as well as that of the milk.

There are many chances for the careless cook to lose some of the food values that she expects to get when she buys or grows vegetables. The more water she uses, the more likely she will be to throw away the vitamins and minerals that have been dissolved in the cooking process. If only a small amount of water is used it's easy to serve this liquid with the vegetables or to use it in sauces, soup, or gravy. Adding soda to the cooking water to heighten the color of green vegetables will increase the loss of vitamin C and B₁. Long boiling or much stirring while cooking may also increase the vitamin destruction, and sieving while hot has the same effect.

Fortunately, the rules for saving the food values are the same rules that make the cooked vegetables taste so good that there will be calls for second, and even third, helpings. Not only will there be more food values left in the

vegetables when they're well-cooked; but also, the family will be getting extra food values through extra servings.

Four simple rules stand for success in cooking vegetables. They are: Use as little water as practical. Have the water boiling when you put in the vegetables and then bring it back to the simmering point as quickly as possible. Stop cooking as soon as the vegetables are tender. Make use of the liquid from cooked vegetables cookery. This is chiefly a problem of keeping the natural color of the vegetables.

The effect of hard or soft water is a question often raised in vegetable cookery. Hard water, which is alkaline, makes onions, cabbage, and cauliflower turn slightly yellow. This yellow color should not be confused with the "brown" that develops from overcooking. In fact, you may like the yellow caused by hard water as well as the natural white. Hard water also makes some of the red vegetables, such as red cabbage and beets, turn an unpleasing gray. You can overcome this color change in the red vegetables by adding lemon juice, vinegar, or cream of tartar to the cooking water. Or, you can serve these vegetables with a sour sauce that will have the same effect.

Do justice to your dinner roast by serving it with vegetables that are cooked until they are just tender and seasoned right. Or, serve vegetables in company on a vegetable plate. But before you put your vegetables into the serving dish, be sure to taste and season them carefully. Salt will bring out the natural flavor of the vegetable, and according to the choice of the family, you may want to add pepper, curry powder, spices, or paprika.

Those who really enjoy the flavor of vegetables, usually prefer to have them seasoned very simply and served with butter or other fat, bacon, or bits of salt pork fried crisp. Or, they may choose a sauce -- cheese sauce, white sauce, or hollandaise -- for an occasional variation. And almost all vegetables lend themselves especially well to scalloped dishes.

